

Save the Internet: Divine Mother and "the Call"

PART I: Women In Black

In my latest blog entry, I described a coincidence following the April 29th March for Peace, Justice and Democracy that led me to feel “called” to join the women’s peace movement. Since that entry, I have been working on completing Part II of my short film about the march and also have started work on a new short film about the international peace network Women In Black.

Women In Black (WIB) began in Jerusalem in 1988 when a group of Israeli women gathered to protest Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The women wore black to display their sorrow for victims of the occupation and other wars around the world. Soon after, women from Palestine joined the Israeli women in their silent vigil. News of the network spread to countries throughout Europe and also to Canada, Australia and the United States. Nearly twenty years later, for example, WIB demonstrate for one hour each week in Woodstock, New York at the Woodstock Village Green. Woodstock WIB began holding their weekly vigils in June 2001, several months before 9/11. News of the Woodstock WIB network spread throughout the New York Hudson Valley and now there are WIB networks in other cities like New Paltz, Kingston, and Red Hook. New York City WIB demonstrate for one hour each week at the New York City Public Library at Fifth Avenue and 41st Street in Manhattan. They have been standing in solidarity with the women of Belgrade, the Republic of Serbia, since 1993. Women In Black is a growing movement—and what unites the network is a passion for global non-violent transformation, justice and peace.

On May 14, 2006—Mother’s Day—I met the founder of Woodstock WIB, Jane Toby, on my way to a benefit kirtan, or concert, for Hindu Saint Amma Sri Karunamayi’s 2006 USA Tour visit to Woodstock. Amma is revered by Hindus and other traditions as the incarnation of the Divine Mother Saraswati, Goddess of Knowledge, Creativity and the Arts. Other names for Amma include “Mother of Compassion and Truth” and “Remover of Ignorance.” Amma, in her day-to-day work, is a humanitarian. She founded an ashram, or monastery, in Bangalore, India, and also set-up an orphanage, a school for handicapped children, a hospital and a large food program for the poor. This past Mother’s Day, my own mother was far away in California so a trip to Woodstock and the fundraiser for Amma’s visit seemed like a perfect way to commemorate Mother’s Day and also the sacred feminine.

Women In Black, standing solemnly on the Woodstock Village Green, however, caught my eye. Why were so many women dressed in black on such a beautiful Mother’s Day? I stopped and spoke with a woman named Jane Toby who explained WIB mourns all victims of war including the 100,000 Iraqis killed, the 2,641 soldiers who have lost their lives, and the 300,000 innocent men, women and children who have been injured and maimed since the start of Gulf War II. In return, I told Toby how, because of a string of coincidences, I too had recently joined the women’s peace movement and so wanted to learn more. One of the WIB demonstrators suggested “that is usually how it happens.” I had my camera with me, and so requested to interview on film a few of the WIB women for my website. They agreed. Toby spoke at-length about how she had brought news of the WIB network

from Verona, Italy to Woodstock, New York, and WIB activist Jane Van De Bogart read out loud the First Mother's Day Proclamation written in 1870 by Julia Ward Howe, author of "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Mother's Day Proclamation, 1870

Arise, then, women of this day! Arise all women who have hearts whether our baptism be that of water or of fears!

Say firmly: "We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies. Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.

We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs. From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says "Disarm, Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice!"

Blood not wipe out dishonor, nor violence indicate possession. As men have often forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel. Let them meet first, as women, to bewail & commemorate the dead. Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in peace, each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of Caesars but of God.

In the name of womanhood and of humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women without limit of nationality may be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace. Author Julia Ward Howe campaigned for world peace and was the first woman elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1908. She was also a member of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Transcendentalists. Stay tuned for my next short film posting Where is Amma? about the sacred feminine and the women's peace movement.

PART II: Save the Internet

In the past few weeks, I have been thinking and writing a lot about war so am not surprised I had a terrible dream the night before I began writing this blog story. In it, bombs were falling everywhere and there was nowhere to hide. I felt terror and so did all the other people running from the bombs including a young couple with a baby. We were all trying to find safety but the bombs kept falling, closer and closer. In the dream, I began to sob hysterically. All of a sudden, my professor from the C.G. Jung Institute appeared, and, in tears, I hugged him. I turned to look down, however, and found my camera in pieces and had no idea how I would put it back together again. The world was falling apart and so was my camera. To my relief, I woke up and realized it was only a dream. At the same time, the dream made me reflect on and empathize with what it must be like to live in a war zone where violence takes place everyday. Like the Women In Black network, I too want peace and justice—joining the women's peace movement in addition to creating short films about non-violence are my vehicles for action.

I have been conducting research, which includes reading and watching other films, for the creation of

my short films and also story blog. A few hours after I woke up, the dream was still on my mind when I sat down to watch Outfoxed Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism back-to-back with another film Paying the Price Killing the Children of Iraq. The first is about Fox News Network and how it uses lies and manipulation to push a neo-conservative corporate agenda, for example, Project for a New American Century (PNAC). The PNAC proposed a plan to remove Saddam Hussein from power several years before September 11th. It appears Bush always wanted war with Iraq and had no plans for diplomacy. Does he want war with Iran too? New York Times reporter Steven Weisman writes, "Indeed, Vice President Dick Cheney has led the charge within the administration favoring programs to bring about 'regime change' in Tehran, including support of dissident groups." Gulf War I and II veterans say yes, Bush wants war with Iran. It looks like Cheney wants war with Iran too. Is the plan for the attack on Iran about weapons of mass destruction and homeland security or is it about oil and corporate security? The second film Paying the Price Killing the Children of Iraq is about the United Nations Oil-for-Food Program and more than ten years of sanctions against Iraq between Gulf War I and II. The program made it impossible for Iraqi doctors treating patients including children to obtain basic necessities like medicine, medical syringes and blood bags for transfusions—items that had nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction, and, as a result, over 500,000 Iraqi children died. It is difficult to decide which film was more chilling. In Outfoxed, statistics suggest Murdoch's network reaches 4.7 billion worldwide. That is to say, Murdoch's propaganda machine manipulates and lies to billions of people. Hitler, like Murdoch, relied on a Ministry of Propaganda to control his audience. Under Hitler's rule, millions of Germans were deceived and so millions of Jews died. Fifty years later, the world realizes Hitler used lies and deception to build his empire. Would Germans have fought harder against Hitler's rise to power if they had realized the truth? How can it be Hitler's personal secretary did not know about Hitler's death camps? She prepared his daily memos but admitted on film in the documentary Blind Spot Hitler's Secretary that she in fact did not know about the death camps. Similarly, Murdoch's empire hides the truth. Will the White House's new Press Secretary former Fox News commentator Tony Snow hide the truth? It does not seem to be common knowledge that 500,000 Iraqi children died as a result of sanctions against Iraq between Gulf War I and II. The story was not reported in the "news." Consequently, Murdoch's empire continues to suppress information, for example, it led billions of viewers to believe Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, a lie that has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people and thousands of American soldiers. According to other news sources, between 100,000 and 1,000,000 Iraqis died under Saddam's rule (approximately thirty years). On the contrary, 100,000 Iraqis died in the first 18 months of Gulf War II. The truth is Iraqi people are dying at a much higher rate under the US occupation than under Saddam's rule.

I visited the Move On website after watching Outfoxed to learn more about Move On since the organization helped fund the production of Outfoxed. There I learned Congress plans to pass a radical law during the week of May 22, 2006 that threatens net neutrality and free access to information on the internet.

From Move On's Save the Internet web campaign: So I signed Move On's petition, wrote some letters

to New York State Senators and Congress, and also agreed to write a blog story about the issue. Freedom of access to information on television and in newspapers, and more importantly, on the internet, is too important in an era when extremist media networks like Fox News seek to control access to “true” information. The film Outfoxed makes a point that “no television news channel in history has reported less” and adds Rupert Murdoch is “controlling the airwaves at the expense of public necessity.” The majority of people who watch Fox News do not know they are watching propaganda. I now understand, thanks to the film, corporate control over the media is a major political issue.

The film Outfoxed ends with a “call to action” for anyone who values democracy to join the movement to voice public outrage. I now feel “called” not only to join the women’s peace movement but also to spread the word about corporate control of the media. Please do the same. It is only when both sides of an issue are accurately represented that real dialogue and also solutions to problems like war and weapons of mass destruction are possible.

PART III: Commentary

On that note, I have two comments: the first is that later in the day after I watched both films and started this story blog, I arrived at work and was assigned a new case. I am a social worker and provide children and families help with a range of problems. In our first session together, my new client began to cry uncontrollably like I had cried in my dream. She told me how she had witnessed the murder of her sister at point-blank range thirteen years ago. She also described how she had a splitting headache so intense it was as if her head was about to explode. I too had woken up with a splitting headache. A coincidence? I knew how she felt. It was hard for me not to cry while listening to her story, especially because I love my own sisters and to see anyone close to me shot in the head would be deeply upsetting.

I explained to my client how posttraumatic stress can last for years when it goes untreated, and how some war veterans and also victims of war and violence continue to suffer, sometimes for twenty and thirty years. She said yes, she suffers from nightmares and flashbacks, weekly and sometimes daily. If my new client suffers this much pain thirteen years after the incident, I wonder how the Iraqis must feel, their children bombed, killed and maimed for no good reason, not to mention ongoing limited access to medical and other supplies. Sure, the Iraqis had it bad under Saddam’s reign, but probably had it worse after Bush Sr. started Gulf War I and even worse after Bush Jr. started Gulf War II.

My other comment is that yesterday, I noticed a short article in the New York Times “Fox, What Fox? New Press Secretary Changes Channels.” The article is about our new White House Press Secretary and former Fox News Commentator Tony Snow. Snow just finished his first week on the job. The article suggests televisions in the West Wing of the White House are regularly tuned to Fox News, and that televisions in Dick Cheney’s and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s planes are tuned to Fox News and that until last month the television in the Press Cabin on Air Force One was also tuned to Fox News. I hope someone has informed Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, G.W. Bush and our new White House Press Secretary that the “news” on Fox News Network is all propaganda. I do not not

want our leaders in a time of war to make important decisions like whether or not to go to war with Iran based on false information. A lot of innocent people are dying and families on both sides, especially mothers, are suffering needlessly as a result.

This past Sunday, Fox News invited Senator James Inhofe (R-Oklahoma) to present his side of the story on global warming. Inhofe believes "global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people."

The greatest hoax? Hint: It starts with a F and ends with an K.

On May 24, 2006, there will be a National Day of Outrage to Protest the Telco Driven Congressional Legislation that threatens open access to information on the internet. For more information, go to: <http://saveaccess.org>

Resources:

Amma Sri Karunamayi: www.karunamayi.org

Articles: On new White House Press Secretary: New York Times, "Fox, What Fox? New Press Secretary Changes Channels", May 22, 2006, by Elizabeth Bumiller/White House Letter; On US Occupation of Iraq: www.sfgate.com

Films: Outfoxed Rupert Murdoch's War On Journalism, www.outfoxed.org, Paying the Price Killing the Children of Iraq, <http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/pay.html>

Hitler: film Blind Spot Hitler's Secretary, <http://www.sonyclassics.com/blindspot/core/hasFlash.html>

Julia Ward Howe, The First Mother's Day Proclamation:

http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/0000/1870_howe_mothers-day.htm

War On Iran: May 25, 2006 New York Times article "U.S. Rejects Direct Talks With Iran but Keeps Meeting With Europe, China and Russia" written by Steven R. Weisman.

Move On: www.moveon.org

Neoconservatism: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoconservative>

Save the Internet: <http://saveaccess.org>

Women In Black: www.womeninblack.net